Middle School Observation

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I was able to go into one of the 6th grade classrooms at Stanley County Middle School. Mrs. Cronin was highly recommended by her colleges as using a variety of technology with her teaching. When I asked Mrs. Cronin about coming in she told me that she has not been as good about using technology in her lessons this year compared to others. Mrs. Cronin teaches reading to all the Middle School students (6th, 7th, and 8th).

On my first visit the students were reading a story out of their *Scope* magazine and before they began reading it, Mrs. Cronin was having the students define the vocabulary words. She was using the Smart Board to project the vocabulary words on the Smart Board and then the students were to write down what they though the definition of the word was. Once they went through all the words, they were then given the laptops and they went to dictionary.com and looked up the definition of each word.

The students appeared to be highly engaged in the lesson. At first they did not want to write their own definitions down for the words, but once they did a few together they started to catch on to the activity.

On my next visit in their classroom the students all had a laptop and were using them to follow along with Mrs. Cronin in their *Scope* magazine. This was the first time the students had used the laptops to read the magazine. So Mrs. Cronin had them each use the laptop to follow along as it was read aloud. She said that in the future she will let them use the headphones to listen, but for the first time doing it she wanted to have them do it as a group. Throughout the reading selection, she would occasionally stop and ask the students questions. This was a way for her to make sure they were following along. The article they were listening to was on JFK and the 50th anniversary of his death.

As a follow up lesson the next day, the students were to use the laptops to create a one page summary of what they had learned about JFK. The students were encouraged to use details from the article they had listened to the day before and to use the internet if they needed to find more resources. The students were able to follow the directions for the assignment and complete their assignment. As the students completed their assignment they would make comments about some of their findings.

I did my last observation in the Middle School in another 6th grade classroom. They were doing a similar lesson to one that I had observed. The students were listening to their Science textbook read aloud to them the book was projected on the Smart Board and once they were done listening to the selection they were given a paper and pencil worksheet to complete on their own. During the selection the teacher just played the video, but never stopped it to have discussion with the students. I felt that if she would have had discussion then maybe the students would have followed along better. I do not know how the students did on their worksheets, but I would assume they did not do as well as they could have.

The Middle School is very similar to the High School in that not many of the classrooms take advantage of technology. Mrs. Cronin is one that you can walk into her room and can almost always see technology being used, even if it is just using the Smart Board as a projector. I think that is at least a step towards using it compared to other teachers. Most of the teachers in our district have a Smart Board but they never get turned on. It is very frustrating that is appears technology is not a priority in our district like it should be. They do expect all the computers and laptops to be working when they start the Smart Balance and when they use it once a semester for MAPS testing. Otherwise, the administration does not stress the use of technology.